

Smart College Degrees

by J. Goodman Farr, M.Ed.



"Smart college degrees" can be completed anywhere in the world at a fraction of the cost and time required for on-campus degrees. Through technology and independent study, you can get your degree without having to worry about fighting traffic, finding parking spaces, falling asleep in class, being late to class, or paying parking tickets. (If you don't need a college degree, finish your high school education or earn a technical certificate through some of the same methods!)

Most traditional on-campus bachelor's degree programs cost between \$25-75,000! Want to save a fortune? Consider a \$6,000 associate degree or a \$12,000 bachelor's degree from Weber State University by independent study (1-800-848-7770 ext. 6785 toll-free; <http://www.weber.edu/dist-learn>)— no commuting, no classroom time, no dorms, no lines, and no hassles. WSU also offers on-line degrees at a slightly higher cost (<http://wsuonline.weber.edu>). If you are 23 or older, consider a bachelor's degree for about \$15,000 (with only a year on-campus requirement) from BYU's Bachelor of General Studies program (1-888-298-3137 toll-free; <http://ce.byu.edu/bgs/>).

You only pay for the cost of your smart college degree; you don't pay for on-campus room and board or transportation. A smart college degree costs \$98 per credit hour. If you take courses through the Utah Electronic College (1-877-533-9235 toll-free or 801-581-UTAH; <http://www.uec.org>), your cost drops to \$75-85 per credit hour from Utah's community colleges. What a bargain!

With a normal on-campus bachelor's degree, you sit in a classroom for the equivalent of a year of full-time work! Not only are you paying to take classes, you are giving up a year's wages if you aren't working. With the exception of BYU's one-year on-campus requirement, smart degree programs do not require attendance in class. Use your time to travel or live abroad. Why spend years in a classroom?

You are eligible for government grants and loans in a "smart college degree" program. If you're taking correspondence courses, you cannot receive more than half-time aid even if you are taking up to a full load of courses.

If you haven't finished high school, look into BYU's Independent Study High School (1-800-914-8931; <http://ce.byu.edu/is/>) or the Utah Electronic High School (1-801-538-7736; <http://ehs.uen.org>). You can complete your entire high school education at a distance. BYU's entire high school program costs about \$4,800 (a tenth of the cost of many private high schools.)



If you need technical training, try a six-week online course from Mountainland Applied Technology College (1-801-863-6282; <http://www.uvsc.edu/malc>) for only \$59-129 per course. You won't need to purchase textbooks, but you will need access to a computer. (Public libraries provide free computers!) If you can use e-mail, you can take an online course.

Contact each school to see what kind of distance learning and/or independent study options are available to you. As tuition rates rise, get smart. Pursue a smart degree and save a fortune!